

King County Parks Levy Q&A

What happens if the King County Parks maintenance and operations levy is not renewed in 2007?

King County owns and manages more than 180 parks, 25,000 acres of parks and open space and 175 miles of trails — one of the largest systems in the country.

If the maintenance and operations levy is not renewed, most of King County's parks would be mothballed beginning in January 2008. Parks facilities would be closed to the public, with expenditures limited to preserving and protecting the parks and other facilities.

What happens if only one of the two companion parks levies passes?

If only the parks and recreation enhancement levy passes, the money to be allocated to King County would be held in a fund and not expended until operating funds for the basic system are secured. Money allocable to the cities and Woodland Park Zoo would be applied for those purposes as proposed.

If only the maintenance and operations levy passes, King County Parks will continue to operate existing facilities with an additional increment to restore maintenance levels to pre-2002 budget crisis levels.

What would be my annual cost if the property tax levy passes?

Executive Ron Sims' twin levy package recommendation would mean a levy of 10 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Each levy will cost the family residing in a typical \$400,000 home about \$20 a year.

The levy is based on the recommendation of the Parks Futures Task Force, which anticipates Parks' diligent efforts at implementing a partnership-based and entrepreneurial way of doing business to continue.

Why does King County Parks need additional public support? Can't it use other county funds?

The use of most other county funds is dictated by law. The only area in the budget where there is flexibility is the general revenue fund. Unfunded state mandates such as directives associated with jails, courts and public health must be funded from the general revenue fund first as required by law. Because of the increased cost of unfunded state mandates, there is a smaller piece of the budget pie for services like parks that are not mandated by the state.

All that withstanding, the county has pledged to cover any capital funding losses to parks as a result of annexations and incorporations with other available funds as necessary.

What will boosting maintenance funding mean for Parks?

The Parks Futures Task Force expressed “significant concern about the low maintenance levels in the county park system as compared to both historical levels and that observed in city park systems.”

An increase in operations and maintenance funding will provide healthier, safer, more attractive, better maintained parks. The levy revenue would be used to improve maintenance activities in regional and rural parks, including enhanced maintenance of trails, ball fields, and sports courts; more frequent cleaning of bathrooms and litter removal.

How does the levy protect water quality?

Protecting forests, natural areas and shorelines helps safeguard and capture water, and reduces erosion and stormwater run-off. Urban stormwater runoff is the fastest growing threat to water quality. Natural buffers also help trap and filter pollutants before they reached waterways.

Why does the enhancement levy include money for other jurisdictions and the Woodland Park Zoo?

City and county parks systems are complementary and serve the same public; demand for both systems is high and growing. King County’s regional trail system connects to other trail systems, including trail systems in many cities, providing enhanced recreational opportunities for residents throughout the area. The specific Woodland Park Zoo programs that are targeted in the proposed levy are focused on expanding environmental education and conservation programs. These programs would benefit school-aged children living across King County. Historically, the county has recognized the Zoo as a regional asset and provided it critical support.

How can I help?

Continue to participate in King County programs, volunteer for projects that interest you, let us know of any potential partners who would like to provide programs or services. Thank you for your interest and support of King County Parks and Recreation. To provide feedback please contact us at:

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